

POWDER POINT BRIDGE

# Duxbury bridge work to take 6-8 weeks

By Donna MacLearn  
The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY — Work crews will be assigned to double shifts if necessary to repair the fire-damaged Powder Point Bridge by the end of July, officials said last night.

The town also may open one side of the two-lane bridge to prevent traffic jams on the Marshfield roads that serve as the only alternative route the popular beach.

"In terms of the repair, it is not a major problem," said Edmund Dondero, executive assistant to the selectmen. "It is not beyond our capabilities. The major thing is the inconvenience. The challenge is getting it done quickly — as fast as possible."

Fire early yesterday morning burned about 50 feet in the middle of the 2,100-foot wooden span that connects Duxbury to Duxbury Beach. The bridge is the only link from Duxbury to one of the finest beach areas in Massachusetts and to 300 summer cottages on Gurnet Point and Saquish Head in Plymouth.

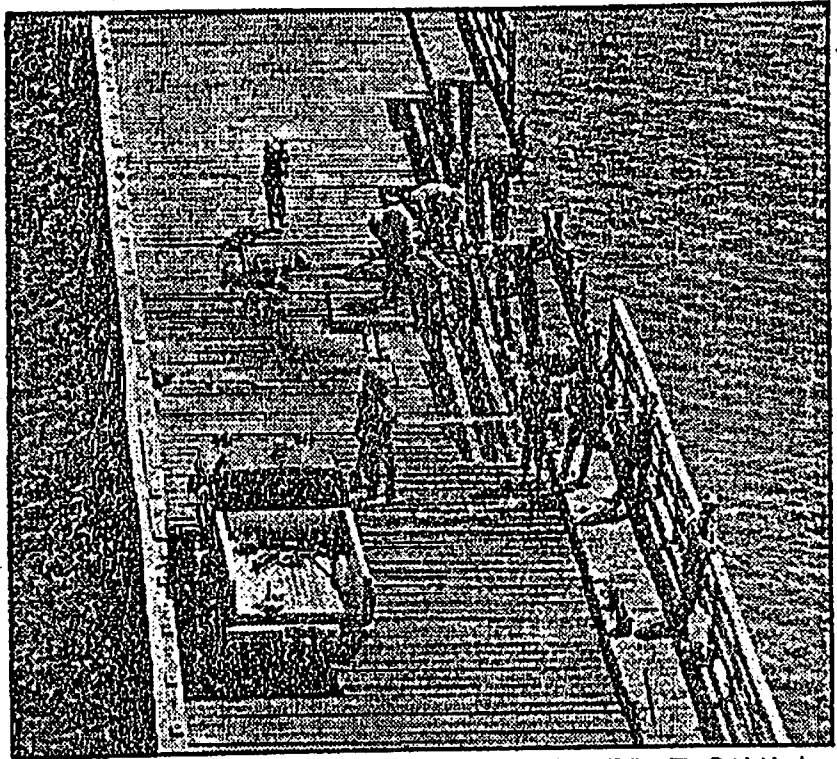
About 70 feet of the bridge will be replaced. Officials said the repairs will take six to eight weeks.

Closing of the bridge will force all beach-bound traffic to go through Marshfield, which adds more than five miles to the trip from Duxbury.

Fire Chief Carl O'Neil said the fire was apparently started by a cigarette accidentally left smoldering within the pedestrian walkway on the south side of the 93-year old bridge.

The state had offered to provide the town with a prefabricated section of bridge for temporary use this

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Duxbury workers begin to repair the damage done to the Powder Point Bridge by yesterday morning's fire.

## Double shifts seen for Duxbury bridge work

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summer, but Engineering Assistant Gilbert Burns said the damaged section of the bridge is too far from shore to do that safely.

The state Department of Public Works has offered to send a diver this week to help the town assess damage to the underwater portion of pilings. Burns said some pilings will be replaced anyway so the town won't have to restore that portion of the bridge for many years.

Work crews were out yesterday cleaning away charred debris. Burns said at least four of the 10 men in his department will be assigned to work on the bridge full-time.

Representatives of the police, highway and conservation departments and the private owners of the beach are expected to meet before the weekend to discuss ways to control traffic at the Marshfield end of the beach.

The Powder Point Bridge, once called Gurnet Bridge and Long Bridge, is a shortcut through Duxbury and across an inlet to the beach peninsula. The alternative is to follow Canal Street in Marshfield to Gurnet Road in Duxbury at the start of the seven-mile beach.

Gurnet Road area residents in Duxbury have complained in the past that thousands of cars lined up in front of their homes over the course of the summer to park at the 225-car Bradford parking lot and the 1,400-car Blakemam's parking lot — the only lots open to the public at Duxbury Beach.

Now the temporary closing of the Powder Point Bridge during the peak summer season will bring even more vehicles along that route — the hundreds of Duxbury residents with beach stickers for the 404-car town-leased lot further down the beach, the hundreds of four-wheel drive vehicles that have bought permits from Duxbury, and owners of the cottages on the Plymouth end of the

Canal Street resident Joseph O'Shea of Marshfield said traffic was his first concern when he learned of the bridge's burning yesterday. "Maybe they'll get discouraged and go someplace else," he said.

Canal Street resident Kenneth Kingston said it's hard to imagine the traffic being any worse.

One summer, Kingston said, his family's injured dog died on the way to a veterinarian because of the long wait in traffic. "What if it had been a child?" he said.

Gurnet Road resident Walter Read said he noticed the beach traffic was heavier yesterday before he heard the bridge had burned. "Where do we draw the line?" he asked. "What are my rights?"

He and area residents convinced the beach owners this year to provide police details to direct traffic on hot weekends and holidays. In the past, residents complained they had to wait 30 or 40 minutes in beach traffic to get home after church or after buying the Sunday paper.

(Also contributing to this report was Maria B. Smith)